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Message from the Music Director

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It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to *French Revue*, the second concert of our 23/24 Symphonic season, a concert that honors the atmospheric vibrancy of French music from the Impressionist era to the present day. This concert promises to be one of simple yet profound delight, as we share the evening with my brother, saxophonist Dr. Robert Young.

We invite you to immerse yourself in the gentle elegance of Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, where colors vividly come to life through orchestration that will melt you into your seat. With Robert as our soloist, Connesson's *A Kind of Trane* pays tribute to jazz icon John Coltrane, adding a distinctly American flair to a rich orchestral sound. Coltrane's wild flights of freedom

are met with a "Man versus the Machine" style that is some of the most challenging music ever composed for the soprano saxophone. Ending with Farrenc's Symphony No. 3 in G minor will provide a rich and colorful perspective on French repertoire that is sure to round out the palette and leave you feeling nourished and inspired.

Your presence is essential in making this performance come to life, so we thank you for making Berkeley Symphony your priority today.

—Joseph Young

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Today's Program

Joseph Young *Conductor*

Claude Debussy *Prélude à L'après—midi d'un faune*
(*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*)

Guillaume Connesson *A Kind Of Trane*
I. "There is none other"
II. Ballade
III. "Coltrane on the Dancefloor"
Dr. Robert Young *saxophone*

Intermission

Louise Farrenc *Symphony No. 3 in G minor, Op. 36*
I. Adagio. Allegro
II. Adagio cantabile
III. Scherzo. Vivace

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Program Notes

Claude Debussy

Born on August 22, 1862, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France; died on March 25, 1918, in Paris

Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune (*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*)

Composed: 1892-94

First performance: December 22, 1894, in Paris, with Gustave Doret conducting

Duration: c. 10 minutes

Scored for 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 crotales (“antique cymbals”), 2 harps, and strings

Prelude to the *Afternoon of a Faun*, Claude Debussy’s first important work for orchestra, is often cited as the point of origin of the French composer’s thinking as a radical innovator. Just as often, the piece evokes associations with so-called “Impressionism.” Debussy disliked that analogy with the visual arts, however, preferring to point to the literary source behind *Faun*: Stéphane Mallarmé’s Symbolist poem, *L’Après-midi d’un faune* (“The Afternoon of a Faun”), which dates back to 1865 and was published in 1876.

The poem is a dramatic monologue whose ancient pastoral setting alludes to the *Eclogues* of Virgil. The setting

serves as the backdrop for the erotic fantasies entertained by a faun (a mythic rural deity who is half-man, half-goat) as he recalls his attempts to seduce beautiful nymphs. The faun evokes the seductive spell of music by playing his reed pipes. Debussy initially envisioned an orchestral triptych based on the poem but completed only the first part (which is why he gave it the otherwise puzzling qualifier “Prelude”).

With *Faun*, Debussy leaves behind the Romantic world of emotional subjectivity and enters a nebulous, twilight sphere that resounds with harmonic and rhythmic ambiguities. He abandons the principle of conventional thematic development as well, but he does use thematic and harmonic recall throughout the piece for his own expressive ends. *Faun* thus veers away from the narrative structure of Romantic tone poems, offering a self-contained meditation on Mallarmé’s ode to sex and art.

Debussy replaces such thematic and narrative approaches with a musical process that is closer to the hazy logic of dreams. The score’s breath-like gestures and exquisite instrumental coloring hint at the borderline state between dreaming and consciousness. Debussy’s precision and nuance of gesture convey the ebb and flow of lust and longing—opening the door to a new century of musical experimentation.

This music, as well as the source poem by Mallarmé, held great allure



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for the dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky, a star of the expat company the Ballets Russes (established in 1909 in Paris by the impresario Sergei Diaghilev). Eager to expand his work as a dancer to include choreography, in 1912 Nijinsky turned to Debussy's score to create a pioneering early modern ballet. Nijinsky made the erotic desire expressed by Debussy's music sensuously explicit through provocative gestures using one of the nymph's scarves. "His beauty is that of antique frescoes and sculptures: he is the ideal model, whom one longs to draw and sculpt," enthused the sculptor Rodin, one of Nijinsky's admirers.

What to listen for

In the opening bars, a chromatic flute solo conjures the image of the piping faun. The flute's line oscillates between a C-sharp in the middle of the staff and a G below—a harmonically unstable interval known as the tritone. This harmonic outline subverts conventional patterns of major and minor and thus casts a tantalizingly ambiguous spell on ears accustomed to clearly defined harmonies.

Shifts in weight and balance among the instrumental textures become musical events. Notice, for example, the perfectly timed touch of the "ancient cymbals" that, toward the end, suddenly cast an entirely new light of wistful reflection on music we have heard.

Guillaume Connesson

Born on May 5, 1970, in Boulogne-Billancourt, France; currently resides in Paris

A Kind of Trane

Composed: 2015; rev. 2017

First Performance: July 2015 at the World Saxophone Congress and Festival in Strasbourg, France, with three soloists (Joonatan Rautiola, Jean-Yves Fourmeau, and Nicolas Prost—one for each movement)

Duration: c. 22 minutes

In addition to solo (soprano and alto) saxophone, scored for 2 flutes and piccolo, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, percussion, and strings

One of the most widely performed French composers at work today, Guillaume Connesson draws on a widely ranging and eclectic fascination with musical styles and sources. A keen awareness of the French legacy (especially Debussy, Ravel, and Olivier Messiaen) goes hand-in-hand with his admiration for jazz, American Minimalism, disco, hip-hop, and soundtracks.

Connesson's insatiable curiosity extends well beyond music, too. His lauded *Cosmic Trilogy*, an orchestral triptych, alludes to Stephen Hawking's astrophysics and the art of Kandinsky to depict three stages in the history of the universe (from the Big Bang to the explosive death of a star), while the fantasy fiction of H.P. Lovecraft and Abraham Merritt (whom Connesson likens to an American Jules Verne) also figures

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among his inspirations. His miniature piano concerto *The Shining One* takes its name from a creature in Merritt's novel *The Moon Pool* that lives deep in the planet's core but rises up to the Earth's surface and threatens humanity. Connesson's debut opera *Les Bains macabres*, which premiered early in 2020, is a comic thriller set in a seaside town and pays homage to film noir soundtracks.

A Kind of Trane celebrates the larger-than-life legacy of one of the greatest figures in 20th-century music. The saxophone virtuoso and composer John Coltrane (1926-67) had an incalculably profound influence on the development of postwar jazz and even became the inspiration for a church (the Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church in San Francisco). This December marks the 60th anniversary of the historic session during which Coltrane and his quartet recorded *A Love Supreme*, the landmark album infused with a sense of "a spiritual awakening which was to lead me to a richer, fuller, more productive life," as he describes, in the liner notes, an epiphany he experienced in 1957 "by the grace of God . . . At that time, in gratitude, I humbly asked to be given the means and privilege to make others happy through music."

"Coltrane's phrasing, his total freedom of invention, and his mystical virtuosity have nourished my writing," explains Connesson, who refers specifically to "a melodic album like *Ballads*" (released at the beginning of 1963) and "the Free Jazz inspired by the famous *Love Supreme*" as sources that prompted him to compose his concerto *A Kind of Trane*.

There's also a French connection, of course, insofar as the saxophone was invented by the Belgian-born, Paris-based inventor and musician Adolphe Sax, after whom the instrument is named. In 1846 he patented the saxophone, describing a range of registers from soprano to subcontrabass, which he designed but did not build (the first playable subcontrabass sax was not realized until 2010 and stands 9 ft tall!). Hector Berlioz became an early enthusiast for this hybrid of the woodwind and brass families. Elise Hall (1853-1924), a pioneering American saxophonist born in Paris, promoted the use of the instrument in the concert hall and even commissioned a Rhapsody for saxophone from Debussy (1911).

What to listen for

A Kind of Trane is cast in the familiar three-movement concerto format, with the soloist switching from soprano to alto saxophone in the long slow movement and back to soprano for the unleashed finale. Connesson has provided this commentary on the music: "The first movement, 'There is none other' (a title taken from Coltrane's poem for *Love Supreme*), opens with the tam-tam beat that began his album. After a slow introduction in which the soloist deploys capricious diatonic phrases, a 5-beat bass in a 4-beat measure sets in, leading to the exposition of the main theme, which is developed in imitation. The movement ends with the calm music of the introduction."

"The second movement, 'Ballade,' is a long, continuous melody by the soloist, leading to a lyrical outburst from the

orchestra. A second theme then appears, accompanied by a steady bass that gives the music a slow processional character. When the first theme returns at the end, it gradually deconstructs, ending in a final sigh of sadness.”

“The finale, ‘Coltrane on the Dancefloor,’ is the unlikely meeting of two musical universes at opposite ends of the spectrum: the unpredictable rhythmic freedom of Coltrane and the robotic nature of techno music. This friction between the free and the constrained is the basis of this movement, which culminates in a crazy cadenza. The soloist’s trance is then supported by a percussion pattern, leading to the unleashed coda. The soloist’s cry, cut short by the orchestra, concludes the score.”

Louise Farrenc

Born on May 31, 1804, in Paris; died on September 15, 1875, in Paris

Symphony No. 3 in G minor, Op. 36

Composed: 1847

First Performance: April 1849, with Narcisse Girard leading the orchestra of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire in Paris

Duration: c. 31 minutes

Scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, timpani, and strings

“**A** strong and spirited work in which the brilliance of the melodies contends with the variety of the

harmony,” enthused one critic of the first public performance of Louise Farrenc’s Third Symphony in Paris in 1849. Her admirers included the likes of Robert Schumann and fellow Parisian Hector Berlioz. Yet, as with so many other women and otherwise marginalized composers, her achievements were denied a place in the repertoire and, predictably, suffered unfair neglect until recent reappraisals of Farrenc’s career.

During her own lifetime, Jeanne-Louise Dumont, as she was known before her marriage to the influential publisher and flutist Aristide Farrenc, commanded considerable attention for a musical life that made history in areas beyond composition as well. She was born the year Napoleon crowned himself Emperor (to the wrath of Beethoven, who had just completed his *Eroica* Symphony). She was descended from a line of prominent court-based sculptors on her father’s side (Jacques-Edme Dumont), while some women painters also figured in her family background; her brother Auguste also became a famous sculptor.

Farrenc began her piano training early on and was already performing professionally by her teens. She also studied composition and orchestration with the Czech-born Anton Reicha, a lifelong friend of Beethoven who offered private mentorship, since, as a woman, Farrenc was not officially allowed to enroll in such classes at the Paris Conservatoire. She developed such a high reputation as a concert pianist that the Conservatoire appointed her to a permanent position on the piano faculty. She held it for three decades—the only woman to be appointed to a high-ranking

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professorship there in the 19th century—and even succeeded in having the administration redress her complaint about a glaring gender gap in salary. Farrenc and her husband Aristide also anticipated the emergence of early music as a field of specialty through their multi-volume research into early keyboard styles, published as *Le Trésor des pianistes*.

As a composer, Farrenc's output centered around solo piano and chamber music, but in the 1840s she produced three symphonies; she harbored ambitions to make her mark in the realm of opera as well but did not succeed in finding a suitable libretto. Aristide Farrenc was a supportive husband in her creative endeavors. Aided by her contributions, he ran one of France's leading music publishers and encouraged publication of her music. Still, none of her orchestral scores (two concert overtures along with the three symphonies) made it into print during her lifetime. Aside from some later chamber and solo piano works, she essentially ceased composing following the death of her and Aristide's daughter, Victorine, a star pianist who died young, in 1859, from tuberculosis.

The genre of the symphony was something of an anomaly in 1840s Paris—where the thing for a composer to focus on was, above all, opera. It was in Germany that interest in the symphony flourished among Farrenc's contemporaries, with Mendelssohn and Schumann as the best-known exponents. The Symphony No. 3 in G minor in particular, her masterpiece in the genre, has earned positive comparisons with the work represented by her German contemporaries. It shared the bill with no less than

Beethoven's Fifth at the 1849 premiere by the Conservatoire concert society.

What to listen for

Confidently proportioned and expertly orchestrated, the Third Symphony begins with a short but pathos-filled slow introduction that soon leads into a first movement replete with energy and imagination—especially in its extended coda. The clarinet's exquisitely accompanied melody leading off the Adagio cantabile makes an indelible impact. Farrenc's fleet-footed scherzo might call Mendelssohn most to mind, though there are also faint echoes of the manic energy of Beethovenian scherzos.

The finale closes the work with a fiery, substantial statement that evokes the passionate intensity of Mozart's great symphony in the same key (No. 40 in G minor). Farrenc's dramatic use of pauses is particularly arresting and original as she keeps her gaze firmly on the music's unrelenting dramatic arc up through the final chords.

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Music Director Joseph Young

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American conductor Joseph Young balances a vibrant guest conducting career with leadership roles as Music Director of Berkeley Symphony, Artistic Director of Ensembles for the Peabody Conservatory, and Resident Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra—USA at Carnegie Hall.

His commitment to amplifying voices, both historic and contemporary, has resulted in electrifying programs featuring works by Juan Pablo Contreras, Brian Raphael Nabors, Florence Price, and Carlos Simon, alongside established greats including Adams, Brahms, Dvořák, and Prokofiev.

Joseph's 2022/23 season featured major debuts, including the L.A. Phil at the Hollywood Bowl; at Washington National Opera and the National

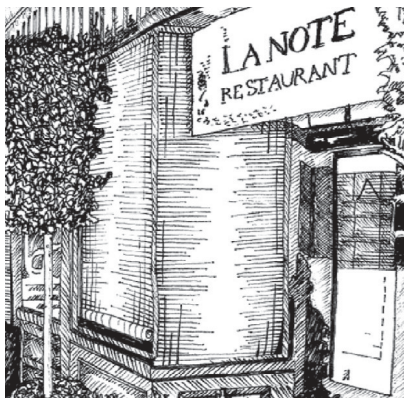
Symphony Orchestra, both at the Kennedy Center; and at Carnegie Hall leading the National Youth Orchestra.

Recent engagements include his San Francisco Symphony debut; inaugurating the Mzansi National Philharmonic Orchestra (Johannesburg); and the world premiere of William Menefield and Sheila Williams' *Fierce* with the Cincinnati Opera. He has appeared with the Seattle Symphony, Detroit Symphony, New World Symphony Orchestra, Spoleto Festival Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música (Portugal), and the Orquestra Sinfónica y Coro de RTVE (Spain), among others in the U.S. and Europe.

Earlier in his career, Joseph served as the Assistant Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony, Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra, and Resident Conductor of the Phoenix Symphony. He also served as the League of American Orchestras Conducting Fellow with the Buffalo Philharmonic and Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Joseph holds an Artist's Diploma from the Peabody Conservatory, studying with Gustav Meier and Markand Thakar. Mentors include Jorma Panula, Robert Spano, and Marin Alsop, with whom he maintains an artistic partnership. Now a mentor himself, Joseph shapes the future of classical music through his dynamic engagements with major symphony orchestras, his steadfast commitment to teaching in classrooms and concert halls, and his service on the board of New Music USA.

Dining Guide



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Guest Artist Bio



Dr. Robert Young, saxophone

Robert Young has been acclaimed for his “effortless expression and a facile technique” and the “true mastery of his instrument” (*The Saxophonist Magazine*). Dr. Young maintains an active schedule as a soloist and educator including guest appearances at universities and colleges across the country.

Dr. Young’s highlights include performances with the PRISM Quartet, The Crossing, Chris Potter, Ravi Coltrane, Uri Caine, Charlotte Symphony, Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Wichita Symphony Orchestra, Charleston (SC) Symphony Orchestra, and University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra. As a chamber musician as part of a collaboration with The Crossing, Dr. Young

performed with the PRISM Quartet on the GRAMMY Award-winning album “Gavin Bryars: The Fifth Century” (available on ECM Recordings). As an active soloist and chamber musician, Dr. Young has been invited as a featured concerto soloist at the XVIII World Saxophone Congress (Zagreb, Croatia) and the 2020 North American Saxophone Alliance conference (Tempe, Arizona). In 2023, Dr. Young appeared as a concerto soloist with the United States Navy Band performing *Quicksilver* by Stacy Garrop.

Dr. Young holds a teaching position at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts as the Associate Professor of Saxophone. Dr. Young’s students have received honors at several local, regional and national competitions and have been featured at several clinics and conferences throughout the country. He previously has served on the faculties of The Crane School of Music—SUNY Potsdam and Wichita State University.

Dr. Young earned his Doctor of Musical Arts (2010) and Master of Music (2008) degrees in saxophone performance from the University of Michigan where he studied with Professor Donald Sinta. At the University of Michigan, he studied jazz saxophone with Dr. Andrew Bishop and was a recipient of the Lawrence Teal Fellowship. Dr. Young received a bachelor’s degree from the University of South Carolina (2006) in saxophone performance where he studied with Dr. Clifford Leaman.

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About Berkeley Symphony

photo by Burgundy Visuals



Berkeley Symphony is unique among Bay Area and American orchestras for its commitment to innovation, community, and excellence. Founded in 1971 in the intellectual and artistic nexus of Berkeley, California, the Orchestra is committed to performing, premiering, and commissioning new music that reflects the culturally diverse people and the heady creative climate of its home city.

In the 2019/20 season, Berkeley Symphony entered a new era under the

leadership of Joseph Young, the Orchestra's fourth Music Director in its 50-year history, following a highly successful February 2019 debut that was acclaimed by critics and audiences alike. In addition to building on the Orchestra's artistic innovation, creativity and adventurous programming, Maestro Young is committed to amplifying the voices of underrepresented composers and artists as well as continuing to tell diverse stories that reflect the local Berkeley community.



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Music in the Schools



photo by David Welland

Crafted in partnership with Berkeley Unified School District, Berkeley Symphony's Music in the Schools (MITS) program provides a comprehensive and inclusive music curriculum to over 4,700 Berkeley public school students each year and is recognized by the League of American Orchestras as one of the country's top music education programs. Ming Luke has served as the Education Director since 2007 and continues to bring joy, laughter, and music to the students in the MITS Program.

Launched in Fall 2022, the Elevate initiative is a series of additional support opportunities to respond to two major transition points where BIPOC student participation and engagement drops more significantly than in other populations: the beginning of fourth grade, when students select instruments in band and orchestra, and high school seniors interested in music as a college path and career.

We thank all who contribute to the MITS program, including those giving up to \$500 annually and those whose gifts have been received since press time. Recognition levels exclude fundraising event auction item purchases and purchases of base-level tickets to fundraising events. While every attempt has been made to assure accuracy in our list of supporters, omissions and misspellings may occur. Please call 510.841.2800 to report errors. We appreciate the opportunity to correct our records.

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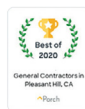


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Please consider making a donation in Bennett's memory to Berkeley Symphony's Music in the Schools program, which he loved and supported. Bennett, we will miss you!

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To **Ming Luke** for stellar service as Interim Executive and Artistic Director during the 23/24 season

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